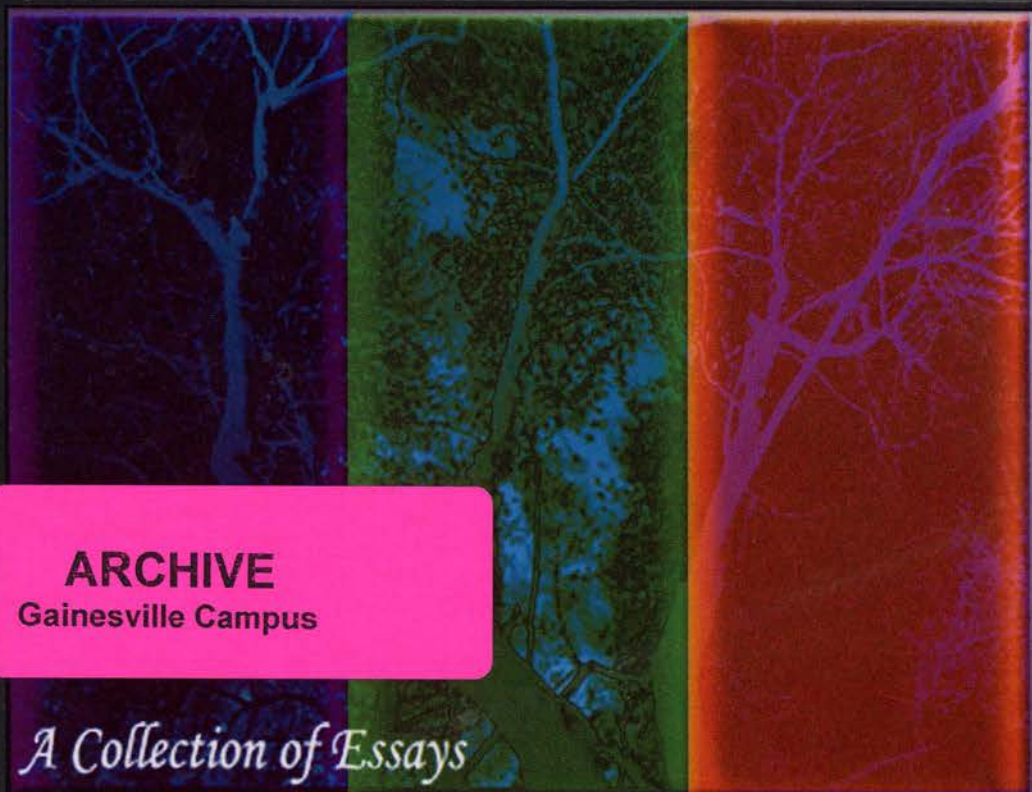


Hoi Polloi



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Gainesville Campus

A Collection of Essays

*Gainesville
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Introduction

As student editor of this year's *Hoi Polloi*, I am honored to present this sample of some of the best writing from the student body of Gainesville State College.

Students, faculty, and staff of Gainesville State College have the rare opportunity to learn from the extremely diverse student population that surrounds us. Traditional students have written some essays found herein, while others were composed by mothers and fathers with children already attending college. This anthology graciously gives us instruction on properly constructing essays while widening our perspectives on the world in which we live.

I would like to thank all of our featured writers for the unique experiences they have shared with us, as well as the hardworking *Hoi Polloi* staff.

Last but not least, is our Advisor, Alex Johns, who continues to educate and inspire us.

Hoi Polloi, for the masses, is a gift – keep it close at hand.

Live, learn, and enjoy.
-Carrie Sullivan,
Editor

How to Poison Your Significant Other And Preferably Get Away With It

By Chassidy Lewis

For argument's sake, let's assume that my three-year relationship with my live-in boyfriend is on the rocks. In fact, let's assume that my boyfriend, John, has become a bit of a nuisance. An infestation, really, like a plague of roaches that refuse to be exterminated. Frankly, he has driven me to the edge of my rope. I can no longer grasp logical thinking, and he must be eliminated. I look to the past for inspiration; more importantly, I look to the past for tips. I find my self needing guidance to alleviate my current problem. I am led to William Faulkner. Now most people would think, "What about Helter Skelter or The Amityville Horror?" Fortunately, most people are driven by the mainstream and tend to overlook the classics. In "A Rose for Emily," by Faulkner, the main character, Miss Emily Grierson, poisons her lover and keeps the body in the house with her, and no one finds out about it until after she dies (119). I put down the book inspired. Imagine getting away with murder. More importantly, imagine sleeping next to a corpse for all those years. If I was ever to actually plot the death of my boyfriend, it would contain a lot more pizzazz, with a lot less of me sleeping with a corpse. I figure if I was really going to get rid of my boyfriend, why not send him out with a little flair?

People are poisoned daily in the United States. Unfortunately, if the victim was poisoned on purpose, the perpetrator of the crime is easily

caught. According to David Crump and George Jacobs, authors of *A Capital Case in America*, for a case of proven attempt to murder or murder by poisoning, the penalty in most cases is death (142). The problem is that people rarely accidentally ingest cyanide or arsenic. Now it has come to my attention that there is a poison that people are readily ingesting and not thinking much of it. Fugu, known more commonly as a blowfish, contains in its organs a deadly poison known as tetrodotoxin. Strangely enough, blowfish is the most popular form of sushi in Japan, costing hundred of dollars per plate. Still, the toxicity of the Blowfish is a valid concern; people are still passing away from eating blowfish. In Japan a chef must be licensed to prepare blowfish and any blowfish exported to the United States must pass rigorous inspection. I'm led to believe that not everyone is following the rules. According to the *International Herald Tribune*, three chefs in San Diego, California, became violently ill after eating contaminated blowfish, as reported by the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1). They received the contaminated blowfish from a colleague who smuggled the fish into the United States from Tokyo (1). This tells me that there are improperly prepared blowfish somewhere in the United States.

Who's to say that John couldn't accidentally ingest some of this ill-prepared blowfish sushi? The real

question is where would I find it? This poses the biggest problem to my would-be plan: acquiring a blowfish. Then there is the question of how I convince John to actually eat raw fish, because I am not too fond of the idea myself. I'm at a crossroads. There are two courses of action I could take, both of which lead to the same outcome.

My first plan would require a huge amount of sacrifice financially on my part, thus the negative side of its appeal. But in the spirit of sending dear John out with flair, the most logical way to get a hold of blowfish sushi, a Japanese delicacy, would be to go to Japan. Imagine John's pure happiness: an all expenses paid vacation to an exotic country that he won't return from. A situation that is unfortunate but feasible. Expedia priced the vacation package from Atlanta to Tokyo at \$2,701.31. We would be staying at the lovely Hotel Nikko Tokyo, located in the heart of downtown Tokyo. The hotel also comes with a five-star rating, which more than justifies the price. Of course, while we are in Tokyo, Japan, we would be obligated to try the local cuisine. Now, me being the adventurous sort of person I am, I would never want to go to the popular, well-established, and well-lighted restaurants. We would be forced to go deep into the heart of Tokyo, finding the places that the people of the city really go to. I, having mastered the art of conversation in Japanese, would then begin to ask about the restaurants that we should stay away from, those restaurants that are not really up to health code regulations - although I would have to check to

see if Tokyo actually has health code regulations. Nevertheless, our adventures would inevitably lead us to a shady type of restaurant. While I myself would not eat sushi, because I am not a fan of fish, John would have to try the sushi because, if one wants to have fish in Tokyo, one has to have sushi. I would then, in Japanese, order John a large helping of sushi, making sure that it was only Fugu sushi.

John would certainly fall sick shortly after ingesting the sushi. According to John Agwunobi, the Department of Health Secretary in Florida, blowfish poison can kill within thirty minutes, so, unfortunately, John would not be riding back to the United States as a passenger, as I am fairly sure one must be alive to be considered a passenger.

My second plan involves investing in a first-rate salt water aquarium. The idea of livening up our drab apartment with a colorful array of tropical fish appeals to me and to John as well. The highlight of my tank would be my very expensive Japanese blowfish, which I would have purchased very legally from a pet store. While it is illegal in the United States to obtain blowfish with the intent to eat them, it is perfectly okay to stick them in a tank full of fake plants. Then in an attempt to liven up our relationship as well as our apartment, I would introduce a series of stay at home dinners themed by various countries. We would start out with Italy, work our way through Germany, then head on to Japan. The main course of our Japanese meal would of course be authentic sushi, freshly prepared by yours truly. John would never

notice the missing blowfish that I named Puffy. He was never really that interested in our salt water aquarium. Shortly after ingestion John would begin to show signs of blowfish poisoning, but unfortunately, neither of us would realize what was happening until it was too late.

Of course, both of these plans are entirely hypothetical. What kind of person would I be if I didn't try to

save our struggling relationship? I mean, all the thought and effort I put into trying to kill John should prove how much he means to me. Why else would I spend almost \$3,000 to take him to Japan and buy two round trip tickets knowing that one would never be used? However, just to be on the safe side, if John happens to ever mentioned we're taking a trip to Japan, don't spoil the surprise.

One Way Road: "Howl" and "The Magic Barrel"

By Abby Crump

The art of postmodern literature is, often, a reshaping, a casting into a relevant mold, of an archetype: life as a journey. Moreover, as the era opened, highways began to spirit men and women—literally and figuratively—far away. Family, community, values, and traditions were left behind. Most roads were no longer well-traveled, nor circuitous. Almost none led home. Likewise, although Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" is exasperatingly dissimilar to other works by design, it can be interpreted as a map of retrospection. The poem recalls life's hellish byways and draws directions beyond those dead ends. Therefore, initiation stories chronicled "en route," a style epitomized by Bernard Malamud in "The Magic Barrel," can be compared, in this way, as a prequel to "Howl." Both of these works suggest that acceptance of, and empathy for, others is, simultaneously, the highway and the destination.

An anachronistic and increasingly common social setting, isolation, exacerbated by a spiritual "homelessness," fuels the urgent need for interpersonal connection. Similarly, in both journeys, modern life constructs a claustrophobic atmosphere. The imagery in "Howl," for example, suffocates: a labyrinth of concrete walls and metaphoric barriers, culminating in the self as an inescapable room. Leo Finkle, the protagonist of "The Magic Barrel," is also confined and ostracized physically, in his apartment, and spiritually, in

rationality. More importantly, the identical response of Leo and the young rebels in "Howl" is luminous. The settings force each individual to chart a unique course. Conventions are, consequently, rejected. For Leo, the tradition of an arranged marriage must be abandoned, an evolution essential for his survival. His imperfection is only redeemed through intimate communion with another fallible, vulnerable person, a theme evident everywhere in "Howl." Stella, for instance, is hardly virtuous, nor beautiful; the young rebels are continually ineffectual. This similarity points to one of the most poignant themes shared by the two works. Imperfect life, with its quirks, is more perfect than the "ideal" because of life's vitality. The proposition follows that "home," an end to wandering (not *traveling*) is usually the answer least, and last, suspected. Compellingly, through this search, this perseverance, by looking out for "number one," these unlikely heroes propel pragmatic and intensely personal foci—that is, to save one's self is, to the extent of one's control, to rescue society.

A refinement of these concerns, the consideration of love and objects worthy of adoration, signals a philosophic fork in the road of each work. Faith, it turns out, provides a reference key. Likewise, Malamud's theme is an imaginative rendering of a Talmudic precept. By saving another's life (not to mention his own), Leo saves the world entire. So he embraces the mixed blessing of

his cultural inheritance, endurance amidst perennial suffering of the Jewish nation. Furthermore, his decision "to convert [Stella] to goodness, himself to God" (2063) clarifies that, in this tale, romantic love is subtly, inextricably entwined with a deepened spirituality and love of God. For the persona of "Howl," however, spiritual communion with others is not possible until his own self esteem is renewed. Nonetheless, a lifetime of prejudice and social exclusion enables him to recognize complexes of character, the dual personality of "the madman bum and angel beat" (l. 76); in turn, the perception of failure, the aforementioned idea of "imperfection," relates another ideological separation. In "Barrel," failure is not success. It is inevitable, yet it is not necessarily destructive. Ginsberg's poem, in contrast, exalts society's outsiders and the downtrodden. "Failure" is relative, and, the reader might surmise, an invention of Moloch. After all, the angels in "Howl" are hipsters. Not surprisingly, then, sexuality, transcendence, and camaraderie are all defined as love.

The quest for marriage vs. transcendence, contemplated in essence, reveals the fundamental disparity of the two works. The identification in "Howl" of Moloch as the enemy compels solidarity to defeat him. All humans are threatened by obliteration, Moloch as "fate of sexless hydrogen" (l. 85), yet the "best minds" (l. 1) are also in psychic danger. They are susceptible, or are viciously targeted, by Moloch's virus: madness. Interestingly, although penned during the same years and in the

same society, "Barrel" does not condemn society as the antagonist. Leo is, admittedly, pressured and perplexed by modern reality. He, therefore, adapts. Malamud's theme, in fine, contends that the self can be one's greatest enemy. Leo's enemy, expressed saliently to the reader, is his fear to take a leap of faith into his heart, the arms of an imperfect woman, and the hands of God. The diverse effects of the works can be read directly from the authors' styles. While Ginsberg violates all literary stylistic norms, Malamud writes in a simple, terse, timeless line. This distinction correlates to Malamud's Jewish worldview, which holds that the struggle does not begin or end with the 20th century. Leo, like everyone else, simply needs a soul mate, as he says, a "to whom" (2059) to lean upon. Love thus creates an oasis to suffer a difficult life, as it, always, has been and will be. He is attracted to Stella because she "had lived, or wanted to [...] had somehow deeply suffered" (2061), someone who might understand. By contrast, Ginsberg's premise is almost convolutedly complex. Theoretically, deprived of its "limbs," its disciples, Moloch would become lame. Refused young rebels, Moloch would starve. In addition to advocating rebellion, the persona, literally, maintains his sanity through memorial (minutely accomplishing the latter goal). Symbolically, he offers "the absolute heart of the poem of life butchered out of the [hipsters'] bodies" (l. 78) as the readers' sacrificial lamb. Poetically, the approach succeeds, and the needed indictment is effective. There is, pragmatically, a missing link. The absence of a plan

that could be implemented exposes that Ginsberg is still en route as well; he has not, as he proclaims, discovered the way. Ubiquitous Moloch is daunting, perhaps undefeatable, and this result engenders a slight tone of reluctant pessimism. Leo's action, his determination to survive and thrive, whispers a more encouraging, optimistic tone.

Leo and the "who" of "Howl" traverse the modern expanse. They live, love, fail, and arise the following morning to continue the journey. In both works, the here and now is the future, an age of redemption. Although the authors craft different themes and settle upon separate solutions, the poem and the story encourage the reader to live within the present moment.

Social Responsibility on the Shoulders of the Comedian?

by Derek Walker

More and more often, I find myself watching comedians who are putting racism and prejudice on the table, comedians who are confronting stereotypes and exposing the things we all deal quietly with on a day-to-day basis. However, a spotlight of negativity has recently caught a few of my favorite stand-up artists in its glare. How far is too far? When, if ever, does the comedy stop merely bringing the stereotypes to light and in turn start empowering these ignorant ideologies? Are Carlos Mencia and Dave Chappelle just comedians, or have they become unexpected voices of social responsibility?

Carlos Mencia's material catches the eye of every critic, with his impressions of the mentally handicapped and his biting material which covers every racial barrier. As an advocate of equality in both rights

and jesting, I love absorbing every word that explodes from Mencia's mind. He says the things that were once hushed jokes among friends. His philosophy is beautiful in its approach, even as colorfully and scathingly as his words portray it. In this respect, he is actually reverent, because a joke should never be told if you could not say those words in front of any person. Mencia is, in my opinion, one of the foremost advocates of free speech, and he exercises it daily. By doing this, he has managed to escape hostility from most by simply busting down the doors of controversy before anyone is even aware of what he or she just heard. Strangely, his comedy has stirred more controversy from Hispanic-Americans than any other race, as seen here:

Indeed, his comedy has caused a bit of controversy in the Mexican American community, as Mencia's frequent use of the words "beaner" and "wetback" has angered some community figures who argue that some of the slurs Mencia uses in his act are historically used for Mexicans and are inappropriate to use. Mencia, a Mexican himself, says he does not focus on any one race, instead creating comedy about all races, ethnicities and religions equally. ("Carlos Mencia - Biography")

However, it has not slowed him down, nor is it likely to any time soon. Mencia has too much to say and a great forum in which to do it. I have watched every stand-up, seen every show, and I work every day for the courage he possesses to say the words that people need to be hearing. Carlos Mencia stands out to me because beneath every

scathing word, every slur, and every over-the-top remark, there is a passionate message pleading with the American people to stand up and speak out for the freedoms this country was built on, the freedom of speech in particular.

Respectively, there is another end to this spectrum of purpose-driven comedy. Dave Chappelle

recently left the country after one of his sketches came under heavy fire in *Time Magazine*. He did not flee because of the controversy, as he was no stranger to it, but because of a

personal chord that was struck while viewing the finished sketch. The situation is explained in the following *Time* article:

The third season hit a big speed bump in November 2004. He was taping a sketch about magic pixies that embody stereotypes about the races. The black pixie--played by Chappelle--wears blackface and tries to convince blacks to act in stereotypical ways. Chappelle thought the sketch was funny, the kind of thing his friends would laugh at. But at the taping, one spectator, a white man, laughed particularly loud and long. His laughter struck Chappelle as wrong, and he wondered if the new season of his show had gone from sending up stereotypes to merely reinforcing them. "When he laughed, it made me uncomfortable," says Chappelle. "As a matter of fact, that was the last thing I shot before I told myself I gotta take f____—time out after this. Because my head almost exploded." (Spring)

Almost overnight, the media transformed Chappelle into the poster-child for the social responsibility of comedy. While Chappelle was away, his show continued on with Donnell Williams and Charlie Murphy, two of Dave's friends and actors on his show. The network decided to air the sketch and afterwards had Williams and Murphy ask the audience how they felt about it. Responses fell on both ends of the scale; however, one member of the audience caught my attention when she voiced my exact sentiment. In a matter of words, she pointed out that it was not on the shoulders of Chappelle, Comedy Central, any other network or person to educate the world. Chappelle was only charged with one thing, what he set out to do: make the world laugh.

So why is it that Mencia goes on while Chappelle feels the weight of responsibility? Each comedian is guided by the emotion he brings to the table, as well as the power he

possesses, and the attitude by which he commands his audience. Mencia knows his rights and feels no burden when calling out and bashing the stereotypes we've tried to hide away in society because ultimately they are still festering. He has stripped the power of negative connotation from these hateful words and ignorant banter. He does not care who he offends because he understands we cannot grow as a people if we do not know who we truly are. Chappelle feels obligated to do the same by stripping the power from people who want to spread hate and ignorance. He feels the pressure that Mencia does not because he has reached a status where he feels he must help eliminate the problems, hindrances, and biases that at one time made him think he was not going to make it. I love to laugh, and at the end of the day, these men set out to make me laugh. Their material is genius and bold, and though not by design, if it is somehow changing the world for

the better, making us stop and analyze the ignorance that we've ignored for so long, and putting

stereotypes into the light to be stripped of their power, then I say keep the jokes coming.



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Sickeningly Superstitious

by Laura West

As I stepped out on to the stage, a rainbow of colored lights flashed in my eyes, blinding me momentarily. As I stood there with the cool metal in my hand, the stage lights blazed down upon my entire body and a rush of warmth surged through me. I wondered if my song would ever start! I wasn't nervous, just impatient. I was overly confident for a girl of my age, and it showed in the 100-watt smile that illuminated my face. I stood proudly wearing the brand new angel necklace my grandfather had given me just moments before I walked on stage. He told me it would bring me luck in my performance, and at eight years old, luck was something I wanted a lot of. The music began and brought my wandering thoughts to an abrupt end. It floated from the speakers, down the walls, then back up into the air, swirling and dipping and diving, up and down, up and down. As I raised the microphone and lightly pressed it against my lips, I began to sing, "I can show you the world..." The crowd seemed so big to me, though I could only make out blurred shapes because of the bright lights. I felt like a performer in the circus, maybe the lion tamer or an acrobat, with all eyes on me. It was later that I found out there were barely thirty people in the audience. Parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters sitting restlessly in the off-white folding chairs in the musty auditorium - a world away from hundreds of screaming circus fans, elephants, cotton candy, and buttered popcorn. As my

performance came to a close, excitement trickled from every corner of my body, bouncing off of me and onto anything and anyone around. I was so happy, and I knew that my necklace had brought me luck. I decided then and there that from that day forward I would always wear that necklace when I sang. It had brought me good fortune, just as my grandfather had predicted.

Unfortunately, not every performance went as well as the first one, whether the necklace was on or not. It didn't even strike me that the necklace wasn't actually "lucky" until I gave a horrendous performance *while* wearing it. However, the first time I humiliated myself on stage was an afternoon when I had carelessly forgotten to put on the necklace. I say carelessly because I had become as devout as a Muslim with his daily prayers making sure I was wearing my necklace every time I was singing. But on this day, I was running remarkably late and was raking my things together to get out the door to my performance. Five minutes before I was to sing the National Anthem to begin my school's playoff game, it hit me like a ton of bricks; I didn't have my lucky necklace! Horrified at the bad energy surrounding this attempt to sing our nation's song without my good luck charm, I humbly scooted out on the stage, slouching and shy. As I began to sing, I noticed that some of the words coming out of my mouth were well, wrong. I mumbled a few that

my brain refused to recall and the more I sang, the worse I got: "Or the land of the free-e-ahh..." *Oh my Lord, my voice just cracked in front of 300 people*, I thought wildly. Ashamed and beaten with my head hung, I slithered off the stage like a serpent whose rattle had just been cut off, back into my burrow where I would stay for the next three months. I canceled all of the performances I had scheduled after that night, and for weeks on end I bathed in embarrassment and self pity. When I finally built up enough courage to sing again, I made sure the tiny gold angel hung close against my neck. By the time this performance was through, I had almost decided to swear off singing forever. Besides singing the wrong verse at the wrong time, I was attacked by a coughing fit, the only remedy for which was two glasses of water, off stage, at the interlude. "How could this happen?" I cried. "I'm wearing my lucky necklace!"

The reality that my necklace was not lucky was hard to face when I finally recognized it. It *didn't* have the magical powers I had so foolishly bestowed upon it and clung to like a spider to a web. As with every superstition, when the truth comes knocking, you have to answer the door no matter what. I never thought I was the type of person to be drawn in by superstitions, until I realized that I had created one for myself. Superstitions plague today's society and ultimately run many people's lives. From black cats, walking under ladders, and stepping on a crack, to opening umbrellas inside, the number thirteen, and broken mirrors, for years our culture has religiously ascribed to empty

superstitions at all cost for fear of years of bad luck or even death. But how logical are these superstitions? Is there any real proof that failure to observe any of these things has harmful consequences with even the remotest consistency? If you step on a crack, does your mother's back really break? Of course not! The case of my singing is no different. How does a tiny, gold angel necklace have anything to do with delivering a song on stage? It has no verifiable influence on air passing from my diaphragm over my vocal chords, nor does it "manage" my memory in which the song lyrics are stored. But society's knack for blaming bad things on superstitions is a nasty little way to hide the even bigger issue here (besides gullibility), which is our willingness to accept the unexplainable. People are constantly searching for the reasons bad things happen, and solace comes more easily by blaming that black cat or broken mirror for years of heartache and misery.

I have been thinking it over, and the best way to help our society to grow up a little is to relieve us of our crutch, to rid us of these superstitions that are too often taking the blame. They've had enough. But how can we just erase years of superstitions from our minds? Well, I was thinking of a "World-Wide Brainwashing Fest" that could constitute a summer's vacation, only without the tan. Here there will be no annoying superstitions lurking behind people day to day, leaving them in fear and dread. During this time, people can adopt that black cat that they've always wanted or they can deliberately walk under a ladder.

But alas, I offer this solution to the ill effects of holding superstitions only in jest, because the only thing we can do about these tricky little things is rather boring and not in any way guaranteed to help our culture mature! This is, of course, to encourage people to use their brains! How many black cats did you pass pouncing on sidewalk cracks, running under ladders, and cracking mirrors in packs of thirteen on the day you fell and twisted your ankle or stepped off the curb and got hit by a bus? If your answer is none, there is hope for you yet! You are slowly becoming more mature and accepting things out of your control. Your intelligence level has just

increased by two points, and you no longer believe that Elvis or TuPac are still alive! For those of you whose answer was anything else, see a psychiatrist today!

Will our society ever be able to accept the things they cannot understand without blaming ludicrous and irrelevant ideas? If people decide they want to be mature and further their development, such hope is possible. As for me, I've put my superstition away in the jewelry box my grandmother gave me for Christmas last year. I no longer believe it controls my performances. Good or bad, I'll keep singing, "Very superstitious, writings on the wall..."

Choctaw Willy's All Natural Sauce

by E.J. Schmitt

It's an inescapable, all-too-familiar scene: you, the buyer, riveted in the middle of the grocery store with millions of products vying for your attention, each one practically jumping off the shelves and screaming, "Look at me, I'm new!" or "Pick me! I'm 40% larger!" If inanimate objects had this power of audible speech, it would undoubtedly make quite a cacophony. Fortunately for us, we still have at least another decade before advertising descends into the realm of aural assault; however, this current limitation makes the competition for visual dominance even more aggressive. While some products are engaged in a rat race to sport the most advanced technology in their components or boast the healthiest nutrition facts on their labels, other marketing strategies employ the opposite tactic by appealing to those with an appreciation for the "good ol' fashioned." This form of advertising can be an imperative factor in an item's overall success, combining stylized motifs and familiar icons to stimulate the desired effect because, regardless of one's opinion concerning psychology or American history, people will never cease being fascinated or comforted by the events of the unchanging past.

Take Choctaw Willy's All Natural Sauce, for example; its darkly-colored, whiskey-flask appearance immediately harkens back to days of the Old American West with its vintage look. In fact, it could easily be assumed that the

shape of the container is deliberately imitating an old liquor bottle in order to exploit its use of classic imagery, and when browsing an endless selection of otherwise characterless condiments, the customer would perceive that this familiar symbol construes the unspoken as "herein lies the good stuff." Everything that consumers love about barbecue sauce - its flavor, its boldness - also applies to whiskey, and even though alcohol is not listed as an ingredient, the implication alone is sufficient to warrant a second glance. Embossed just below the neck of our iconic bottle is a profile of a Native American man with feathers in his hair, commonly known as an Indian Head among coin collectors and "Wild West" enthusiasts alike. This particular feature enhances the container's authentic appeal, despite its being plastic instead of glass.

The label, perhaps the most important part of any product, further emphasizes the western-whiskey references with its color scheme of black, red, and gold and its trademark Western font, which boldly proclaims "CHOCTAW" at the top center of the label in bright white, arching text. A round logo is printed in the precise middle of the label, and the words "Choctaw Trading Company" circle about the black and white ink image of that same Indian head embossed on the bottleneck. Unquestionably, this is a tribute to the product's namesake: the Choctaw tribes of southern and western North America.

At first glance, one might think that this container actually is a bottle of whiskey, so convincing is its design. The gold trim bordering the face of the bottle is a particularly significant item, since its material is not paper like the rest of the label, but a very thin foil that catches the light and gleams outwardly from an otherwise monochromatic background. At each of the four corners are printed two golden feathers, such as the kind the Indian wears in his hair, at ninety-degree angles of one another. These gilded accents could be imperative in attracting the attention of potential buyers, subtle without deviating from the overall "theme" of the product. Theme is unquestionably a key factor in the marketability of Choctaw Willy's Sauce.

The allure of this item is directed towards a certain group of individuals who envision a grander scene when it comes to food preparation: not indoors but rather outdoors with an open fire flaring up from a blackened grill, sounds of sizzling and hissing, the smell of hickory smoke wafting through the

air. It's a scene from the Old West itself, reenacted in one's own back yard. These "good ol' folks" want a product, they need a product, to complement this rugged fantasy, and a bold barbeque sauce in an old-fashioned whiskey bottle achieves this objective with gusto. In essence, it is this factor which so greatly defines this item's target audience and consequently establishes its place in the boundless realm of commercial advertising.

This marketing strategy of traditional values and old American culture is certainly a risky endeavor when faced with today's technology-centered individuals. More and more often, we as a consumer-oriented society find ourselves trying desperately to catch up with a rapidly changing environment, satisfying our overwhelming appetite for the "Next New Thing" by whatever means we can. However, no matter how advanced we become, there will always be a lingering need to delve into the safety zone of simpler times and a desire to taste the rustic flavor of days long passed.



Is Goku Just a Big Monkey?

by Roberto Gutierrez

When a western person reads *Monkey* for the first time, he or she might think that it is a rudimentary work. This opinion might be expected given the fact that it is an ancient book based on a recompilation of even older oral tales meant to amuse the average adult Chinese citizen of the time. However, many western novel readers simply rush to this conclusion, shocked at what they consider a barbaric child's story, given the fantasy elements that go together with explicit adult situations, or what they regard as underdeveloped characters because of the lack of pure heroes and totally evil villains, or what they deem as a meager plot. Nevertheless, if readers analyze *Monkey* a little more carefully, they will find these elements were frequent in adult Asian leisure storytelling at the time of the novel; furthermore, they are commonly present in contemporary works of other Asian entertainment genres, such as animé. For example, these same elements can be found in *Dragon Ball Z* (DBZ), one of the most beloved and successful animé creations worldwide. Even though DBZ is Japanese and *Monkey* is Chinese, their similarities are too numerous to be coincidental.

In Asian entertainment, fantasy is not exclusive to children. This can be observed at the very beginning of *Monkey*: "There was a rock that . . . became magically pregnant and one day split open, giving birth to a stone egg. . . . fructified by the wind, it developed

into a stone monkey, completed with every organ and limb" (10). The initial idea that a western reader gets is that *Monkey* is a traditional fairy tale, lacking only the sempiternal "once upon time." Moreover, *Monkey* holds all kinds of gadgets on pins in his ears that he can use as needed: "Monkey took his needle from behind his ear, recited a spell which changed it into a huge cudgel" (21), he "somersaulted through the clouds and landed right into the palace of the Dragon King of the Eastern Ocean" (21), and he was imprisoned in a mountain for five hundred years as a punishment from Buddha for creating havoc in Heaven. The same situation exists in DBZ, except for the fact that it is a cartoon from an entertainment genre that excludes children of Western cultures, because of the possibility of drawing any kind of fantastic situation together: space ships of the most ridiculous shapes and functions (all the useful gadgets of the Capsule Corporation), speaking animals turned characters (a turtle, a pig, a squirrel, a fox), alternative realities and other worlds and dimensions, (the pink universe and the little planet of the Kaio in the World of the Death, distant planets and universes in which the *Dragon Balls* are spread and lost). All of these would be very appealing for children's bedtime stories if they did not go together with explicitly violent situations: "The robbers fled in confusion, but in an instant he was among them and striking right and left he slew them all, stripping

off their clothing and seizing their baggage" (21), or sexual situations: "The monster, quite taken in, came up to the bed and grabbing at Monkey tried to kiss him...*take off your clothes and get into bed*" (32). This is nothing different from DBZ, since there are very graphically violent fight sequences with powerful blows and lots of blood, and, although not as common, scenes with sexual connotations. This recurrent hunger for fantasy might answer the need of the common Chinese citizens of that time to detach themselves from their harsh reality, heavily burdened by the destiny of a miserable existence being totally devoted to the emperor and his court. In a similar way, the Japanese society of today is highly stressed by the extremely high expectations the Japanese society places on its members from an early age. The competitive and expensive lifestyle, especially in education and profession, fuels the need to disengage from reality and fly away into an unreal world. The misconception of childish fantasy in Asian entertainment and, therefore, cartoons as their ideal expression, reached a relevant level when DBZ had to be rescheduled on American television from its original early evening schedule to its final, more adult-oriented timeslot at midnight.

Another characteristic that might confuse wide-eyed westerners is the lack of pure heart "heroes" or totally evil "villains." As a matter of fact, most, if not all, of the characters in *Monkey* have dubious morals. For example, Monkey proves to be a violent liar: "I shouldn't dare," said Monkey. And so he said, but in his heart there was still lurking a very

evil intent. He took out his cudgel and rushed into Tripitaka, fully intending to strike" (23). Moreover, there are passages in which Monkey cannot control his violence, even to the point of making things more complicated for himself and his acquaintances, like in the episode with the fight when they have just met Sandy, or the havoc of heaven. In this way, Monkey is the "average Joe" hero, imperfect and impulsive, yet skillful enough to save the day even with the disapproval of his master, Tripitaka. Tripitaka, the so-called spiritual leader and master of the expedition, demonstrates a not-so-saintly nature, setting Monkey up to use the spellbound cap to control him. Later on, he also shows a very weak character, crying in despair during the episode of the loss of his horse due to the dragon of the lake. Moreover, his reluctance to let Monkey try to recover it shows a lack of objectivity and leadership, according to his position of leader of the expedition. Tripitaka cries childishly again when they meet and face the struggle of crossing Sandy's lake. Because *Monkey* is a tale meant to amuse the common Chinese peasant, this characterization might be a reaction to mock the rulers or the allegedly enlightened people of the time, normally chosen for their positions based on family relations rather than skills. On the side of the villains, they become allies with Monkey and Tripitaka after viciously trying to kill each other, such as Pigsy and Sandy do. Even Pigsy, as gluttonous and sensuous as he is portrayed at the beginning, will become their ally, although he always complains and questions Monkey's skills. This shift might be

a reference to redemption, a common concept in Asian philosophy. This notion is also present in DBZ, in which bitter enemies such as Piccolo and Vegeta became loyal allies of the main character, Goku. However, just like Pigsy, they always question his aptitude.

Finally, there is the question of plot. It might look very simple and unnecessarily long, with just a series of fights and incidents with no apparent transition from one to the other, with a truly magnanimous quest seeming too big to be accomplished any time soon: the attainment of immortality. It can appear strange that a stone monkey, invincible and eternal, is so concerned about immortality. This problem seems more a matter of denomination than concept. Monkey looks for the Immortals. Aside from being, of course, immortals, The Immortals are well known for their knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, if we do a parallel with the western world, Monkey is not looking for immortality but for "enlightenment" to improve himself to the ultimate

level of excellence. Following this idea, every challenge he and his crew face during their journey is a challenge to improve themselves, to take another step closer to excellence. In DBZ, every fight or enemy Goku and his friends face makes them stronger; they have to reach a higher level of skill in order to be successful. This growth can be interpreted as a lifelong journey to enlightenment, a search for that so-prized transcendence through excellence.

Monkey and DBZ are both very successful and famous works of entertainment for their time and possibly beyond. They both represent and fulfill the needs of a society that initially can appear strange to the western world but that, even after the passage of so much time, still seems attached to its basics. In order to fully understand both, readers have to keep an open mind to see farther than their western backgrounds and observe and admire all the cultural marvels that can be transmitted through works of this nature.

A Life of Contentment:

How My Son's Death Made Me Choose to be Happy

By Gina Buffington

On June 8, 2000, my son, Ian, died after a long battle with cancer. He was diagnosed in December of 1997 with Medulloblastoma, a brain tumor. Before the diagnosis, I had never experienced real tragedy. I had always been happy because my life was filled with love, peace, and a simple routine. However, the diagnosis of my son's cancer changed that life. Now I was faced with the reality that my son was extremely sick and could possibly die. I was shaken by this news and unsure of how I would handle such a serious illness. To say the least, my happiness was challenged. My circumstances had changed; therefore, my attitude toward life changed as well. Although Ian endured many treatments and long days in the hospital, he remained a happy little boy and accepted his new experience as a normal part of life. He refused to allow himself to be unhappy. His example taught me to live beyond my circumstances; he taught me to be content in the events of my life, that my happiness was to come from inside of me. In August 1999, Ian's disease was declared terminal; the tumor had returned, and there were no further treatments or surgery that could be performed. Two and a half years into his battle, Ian passed away. Ian was no longer in pain when his journey ended, but I was left to deal with the loss of my child. My son's illness and ultimate death placed me in a position to make a choice. I had to find contentment in the midst of pain;

therefore, I was liberated from the slavery of circumstantial happiness.

Before my son's diagnosis, my life could have been written as a fairy tale. I had the pleasure of being born into a home of love and acceptance. My parents saw that my needs were met and taught me to be a responsible, productive adult by teaching me respect for myself and for others and by teaching me to work for what I needed and wanted in life. At the age of twenty-two, I married the man of my dreams. We moved to Memphis, Tennessee so that he could continue his education and earn his Masters of Divinity. I worked as a Licensed Practical Nurse in an obstetrician's office, and I loved my job. We were building a life together. Two years into our marriage, we were shocked to discover that I was pregnant. We had not planned this pregnancy, but we were thrilled at our baby's birth. I was blessed with a beautiful, blond-haired, blue-eyed little boy. He was the light of my world. His life brought me tremendous joy. I put time and effort into being a good mother, deeply investing myself into him. I believed that my seemingly perfect world, filled with joy, would continue indefinitely. Life was good, so I was happy.

My world was turned upside down on December 19, 1997. Ian had been ill for approximately six weeks, and I had taken him to the pediatrician on many occasions. However, as the weeks went by, a new diagnosis was given to explain

each new symptom. First, he had an ear infection. Then, his new teeth were blamed for excessive fluid build-up in his ears and the head aches that he had begun to experience. When the symptoms did not subside, I found myself in a battle with the pediatrician. He wanted me to give Ian another round of antibiotics for his ears and return to the office in a week. I refused. I told the doctor, rather abruptly, that I felt the next step was to do further tests to determine if there were any other reasons for the symptoms. I wanted a scan of his brain to rule out a tumor. He reluctantly ordered the scan, and we went back the following day. When the scan was completed, the technician asked us to return to the waiting room. In that moment, I knew that the diagnosis was going to be life altering. After a lengthy wait, we were invited back to the pediatrician's office. My fears were confirmed; Ian had a large brain tumor. We were sent to Atlanta for the diagnosis to be confirmed and to receive treatment. My happiness was taken away because my circumstances did not give me a sense of contentment. I found that I was slowly losing my happiness in every area of my life. For two long years, Ian endured chemotherapy, radiation, and multiple procedures. He lost his eyesight, his ability to walk, and his ability to communicate. On August 8, 1999, we were told that the tumor had recurred and was inoperable; Ian's illness was terminal. Ten months later, Ian lost his battle with cancer. He was just four years old and died five weeks before his fifth birthday. His journey was long and often unbearable. I sat by him and

watched his suffering. I was powerless to change any of his pain. I had been forced to live a life that was full of turmoil and hardship. My life no longer resembled the happy one that I once had.

Once the funeral was over and life began to move forward, I had to learn how to get beyond the pain that came from Ian's illness and his death. I turned to a support group for parents whose children had died. This group was nationally known, so I felt confident that these people could help me. The compassion and understanding from the other parents were comforting; however, as time went by, I observed something distressing. Many of the parents had lost their children as many as twenty years prior to my joining the group. A majority of these parents chose to live a life of unhappiness because of their child's death. I did not want to live my life with this constant pain and loss. I did not always want to feel so raw. I needed a life beyond my pain. In my soul, I wanted to be happy again. My decision was to choose contentment in spite of the death of my son. There were lessons to learn in life that I could not learn while I remained deep in my grief and a victim to my circumstances. I was determined to make my life happy again. I knew that I would miss Ian often and wish that this tragedy had never happened. But there was a life of happiness for me without my son. Although moving forward without my son was a hard decision to make, I had to move beyond this tragedy. I realized that I had a lot of life still to come. I decided to live with contentment so that I could be happy again. I came to realize through this

experience that although my circumstances would often change, my happiness could remain.

Because my life went in a direction that I would have never chosen, I chose to live a life beyond my heartbreak. I have learned that my life could change in an instant. But I have the power to decide how my circumstances will affect the rest of my life. I am a better person because I chose to be content no matter the circumstances of life. I now find happiness with the rising

of the sun. As long as I have a new day, I have the opportunity to be happy. Each day has value and must be appreciated. Today, my life has the appearance of a life untouched by tragedy. I have three healthy little boys who are the light of my world. My happiness comes from the choice to move forward. I am better fitted for the life that lies before me. I have chosen to be content. Even when faced with a tragedy, I can still find happiness.

The Path to Maturation

by Jennifer Schindler

Maturity does not come to a person overnight but is a lesson taught to each of us individually, and usually the transition is confusing and devastating. Many of us have tried to rescue someone at least once in our lives. Whether that person needed rescuing is a different matter. People often disguise their motives to themselves and others in order to appear to be or feel heroic and selfless. In reality, however, most of us only want to feel needed and accompanied when we are lonely. Often times when we try to help others, we are only acting out of our own need of help. This situation arises in "Saving Sourdi," by May-Lee Chai, and "A & P," by John Updike. The central characters go through immature struggles trying to play the "hero" and ultimately come to a realization that helps them mature.

In "Saving Sourdi", Nea is faced with the fact that her dreams of forever being by her sister's side are impossible. She unconsciously believes that by saving her sister Sourdi, she can ultimately save herself. The family is from a Confucian Cambodia, where lifestyle and culture are very different from American culture. However, Nea does not understand her native country's views because she has been Americanized. In the opening scene, Nea stabs a man whom she sees as a threat to her sister Sourdi. When she realizes what she has done, she says, "I thought Ma would take care of everything now. And I was right,

she did, but not the way I had imagined" (122). Nea's mother cleans the man's wound, pays for his dinner and drinks, and makes Nea apologize, which in Nea's eyes means that "life [is] so unfair" (123). Never once does she weigh the consequences of her actions, nor does she act in a manner near to acceptable in her culture. She is overly confident and easy to lose her composure.

Later in her story, Nea finds that Sourdi has a new love-interest: Duke. Giving the girls a ride home from school one afternoon, Duke decides to take a detour to show Sourdi "the center of the world" (124). As the city seems to disappear and all that is left in sight is the field in which they stand, Sourdi runs back toward Duke's truck in a panic. She begins to cry as the traumatic memories of the mine fields in Cambodia creep back into her mind. Nea criticizes Duke for bringing them out to the pasture, telling him, "We're city girls" (125). She has no concept of the things her sister once endured and does not make the grim connection to Sourdi's experience of the murders in Cambodia. She is only thinking of herself and her own comfort and future while she kneels by Sourdi to "rescue" her from Duke.

Once Duke is out of the picture, Nea is soon faced with yet another threat: Sourdi's arranged marriage to a man named Mr. Chhay. Despite all of Mr. Chhay's deeds and attempts to make a good impression on the family, Nea refuses to believe

that his intentions for her sister are pure. After Sourdi and her new husband have settled in, Sourdi makes an alarming call home. Due to the flustered sound of Sourdi's voice, Nea automatically assumes that Mr. Chhay has been hitting her. After trying to call Sourdi back several times, Nea calls Duke and convinces him that "[i]t's an emergency" (129) and they must drive to Des Moines. Upon their arrival, Nea finds that her sister's distress is only a factor of her second pregnancy and that Mr. Chhay has not been hurting her in any way. Nea has simply imagined a troubled Sourdi in need of saving, but in truth what she really feels is that her sister has slipped away and needs to be brought back for Nea's own sake.

In Nea's final attempt to save her older sister, she finally comes to terms with the fact that she has been wrong about everything; Sourdi never needs saving. She has been making the effort only for herself. Sadly, Nea admits, "Sourdi looked at me then, so disappointed...She had grown up, and I had merely grown unworthy of her love" (133). She realizes that her sister is content with her life—her life without Nea. This realization is hard for Nea to accept because all her life she has dreamt of adventures and travels alongside Sourdi. She then goes on to say, "I couldn't trust my sister to take my side anymore" (133). Nea feels betrayed and hurt, marking the painful transition to maturation. In the end, Nea drives off looking at her sister with her new family, realizing, "she had made her choice, and she hadn't chosen me" (134).

Similarly, maturation is the central theme of the short story "A

& P," in which Sammy, a young boy working at the grocery store, is bored of his uneventful town. Tired of the usual "cash-register-watchers" (692) and "women with six children and varicose veins" (694), he is ready for an adventure. Needless to say, when three attractive and barely dressed girls walk in, Sammy's imagination perks up. He knows nothing about the young girls, but he begins to picture their home life. He imagines "her father and the other men standing around in ice-cream coats and bow ties and the women in sandals . . . holding drinks . . . with olives and sprigs of mint in them" (694-695). To Sammy, these girls are rich and glamorous, and Sammy wants to be a part of this dream. He watches them walk around the store and finally "the girls come to [Sammy]" (694). As he is getting ready to check out the girls, Lengel, the manager, interrupts. Sternly he informs them, "Girls, this isn't the beach" (694). They turn red, and the "queen" of the group informs Lengel that they have only come to get one thing. However, Lengel again expresses that the girls are inappropriately dressed to be in the A & P. Seeing this drama unfold, Sammy sympathizes with the girls, still having that rich dream in mind. As the girls are walking out, Sammy quits, expecting them to "stop and watch [him], their unexpected hero" (695). Despite his expectations, the girls continue walking and Sammy is left with the results of his impulsive actions. Like Nea, his dreams only lead him to his disappointment.

As Sammy walks out of the A & P, he is reminded of what will happen to him next. His parents will be angry, Lengel will have to fill

in for the rest of his shift, and he will have to find a new job. None of these consequences matter for a brief moment as Sammy looks around the parking lot for the girls, "but they're gone, of course" (696). He realizes at this point how grave a mistake he has made. None of the results turn out to be the way he has anticipated and he is left empty handed. When he turns back to look at Lengel in the A & P, his "stomach kind of fell as [he] felt how hard the world was going to be to [him] hereafter" (696). Life for Sammy will not be simple any longer because he will have to deal with responsibility.

In short, maturing is one of the hardest times in a person's life. It is

not always one single defining moment, but there is no doubt that there will be at least a moment of pain and confusion. Even as adults, we have difficulty putting ourselves into the shoes of others, but it is necessary in maturation. Sometimes playing the hero is selfish even when intentions are good. Often we can conclude that when we try to play the hero, we are the ones who need saving. In "A & P" and "Saving Sourdi", both Nea and Sammy must face the harsh reality that their dreams will never be more than dreams. In coming to terms with reality, they start on the path to maturation.

Mandatory Recycling of Household Waste

By Tracy Davis

Imagine my first grade teacher's look of horror when she witnessed me drinking from a plastic bottle with the word "ammonia" on the label. Ammonia was not being consumed that day, but I was drinking orange juice from an ammonia bottle my mother had diligently sterilized and recycled. In our household, recycling was undertaken as a financial necessity rather than as a result of an environmental conscience. As a young child, I was taught not to waste anything. In my adult mind, this philosophy has slowly evolved into an environmental responsibility to recycle.

Once people have more disposable income, they are able to purchase more commodities. As a result, they use more energy and produce more waste. They also no longer have the financial incentive to recycle or restrict their energy use (Reay 7). How do we instill an environmental conscience to recycle when a society no longer has the financial reason to recycle? For years, scientists have tried to awaken our environmental conscience by showing the connection between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. However, as with any theory, there are many skeptics. Consequently, a portion of the population ignores the scientists' warnings. In his book *Global Warming*, Christopher Spence advises that there is now evidence of a consensus amongst scientists regarding greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. This evidence

can be seen in a 2001 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which is the world's leading group of experts, and in a 2004 report by the U.S. government's Climate Change Science Program (Spence 16 & 113).

According to Dave Reay, the United States currently has 30% of its citizens recycling household waste. He further states that if this figure was increased "by just 5%, it would mean a cut in greenhouse gas emissions of around 36 million tons" (Reay 115). However, 46% of this country's citizens have access to municipal curbside recycling programs (Fullerton 1). There are still people, despite having easy access to recycling, who elect not to recycle. Therefore, given the accumulating scientific data confirming global warming, the government needs to provide legislation that would encourage mandatory household recycling programs, which would have the effect of lowering greenhouse gas emissions and also encouraging environmental responsibility at an individual level.

Recycling household waste has an impact on greenhouse gas emissions in four main areas. Firstly, recycling saves energy. Less energy is required for manufacturing goods from recycled products than from virgin materials. If products require less virgin material, there is an energy savings in extracting, transporting, and processing raw materials. Secondly, recycling allows some materials to be diverted

from incinerators, reducing greenhouse gas emission from combustion. Thirdly, the emission of methane from landfills is reduced. Finally, when paper is recycled, fewer trees are destroyed. Trees play an important role in the carbon cycle and are required in order to trap the carbon underground (EPA Change).

When our refuse ends up in a landfill, it slowly decomposes. During the decomposition process, methane gas is released into the atmosphere. Methane is considered a heat-trapping gas, along with carbon dioxide, water vapor, nitrous oxide, and other minor gases. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), these gases have a greenhouse effect on the sun's energy. Some of the sun's energy is reflected from earth back into the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases play an important role in trapping some of this energy and warming the earth. The earth's average temperature is around 60°F; however, without greenhouse gases the earth would be a lot colder. The problem arises when concentration of the gases increases. The EPA advises that "since the beginning of the industrial revolution, atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide have increased nearly 30%, methane concentrations have more than doubled, and nitrous oxide concentrations have risen by about 15%" ("Climate" 1). According to the Energy Information Agency (EIA), the composition of the various greenhouse gases in our atmosphere is made up of carbon dioxide 84%, methane 9%, nitrous oxide 5%, and other minor gases 2% (Greenhouse).

Methane gas is 20 times more capable of trapping heat than carbon dioxide ("Methane").

"The Proof Is in the Science," by Roger Di Silvestro, illustrates how a slight increase in the average global temperature of 1.4%, since the year 1750, has had an adverse effect on our environment. He states that the rapid increase in temperature, in both the Arctic and the Antarctic, has resulted in the sea ice diminishing, and a 12,000 year old ice shelf in the Antarctic collapsing. He also points out the changes in our weather patterns. In the last 35 years, severe droughts on the earth's surface have increased from 15% to 30%. In the same time period, sea temperatures have risen by 2°F., and sea levels have risen by as much as 7.8 inches. He stresses that it has yet to be determined whether global warming has caused the changes in the sea. The life cycles of animals and plants have also been affected by the climate change. In his report, Di Silvestro includes a prediction from "the world's largest climate-prediction experiment ever," which was undertaken in January 2005. This experiment predicted that global temperatures could rise by as much as 20°F. by the year 2100 (Di Silvestro 10-12). A rise in temperature, by just a few degrees, will have a devastating effect on our environment. Beaches, bay marshes, and other low-lying coastal areas would flood as a result of the ice caps melting. Too much precipitation would be received in some areas of the world, and too little in others. We could see more frequent and intense storms, and infectious diseases could have a wider distribution (Change). Recently,

there have been several reports in the media concerning the fact that the world may soon reach the "point of no return." The theory is that the earth will take on a warming trend of its own because of the damage that will continue to be done over the next few decades.

How is the United States contributing to climate change and greenhouse gas emissions? The United States is the largest emitter in the world as a result of meeting 85% of its energy needs from the use of fossil fuels (Greenhouse). The United States uses nearly 80% of the world's resources but only has 20% of the world's population (Reay 21). Total greenhouse gas emissions by the United States in 2004 amounted to 7,074 million metric tons, which is an increase of 115 million metric tons since 2003. (EPA Inventory). The United States needs to project an image of environmental consciousness to the rest of the world by demonstrating its willingness to combat the problem of global warming. In 1988, a group was set up as part of the United Nations to address global warming from a world perspective. One hundred and sixty nations joined forces and signed an agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions. This agreement was signed in Kyoto, Japan and is known as the Kyoto Protocol. The global target was for a 5.2% emissions cut, although scientists urged a 60% cut (Reay 20). The United States withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol. As an alternative to the Kyoto Protocol, the government put forward a proposal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as a unit of Gross Domestic Product. This voluntary reduction would be

18% between 2002 and 2012 (EIA "Initiatives"). The EPA confirms there is still a continual rise in carbon dioxide emissions, but positive results have been made in the reduction of overall methane emissions, which in 2004, were down by 10% (Inventory). The Clean Air Act was introduced in March 1996. The U.S. Climate Action Report for 2002 details the steps the government is taking in relation to waste management, and the effect that the 1996 Clean Air Act is having on methane emissions. Large landfills are now required to capture and combust their gas emissions. There are also initiatives in place to capture the methane gas to utilize the gas as an energy source (Action). The end users of waste are taking steps to decrease methane gas emissions. However, one must ask what steps are being taken to reduce the refuse in the first place?

The EPA advises that by 2012 the United States will have reduced greenhouse gas emissions directly relating to waste management. This reduction will be equivalent to the removal of four million cars from the road ("Efforts"). Two programs are central to these efforts. The first, WasteWise, has 1,200 organizations participating. It is a joint, voluntary effort between the EPA, U.S. businesses, and local governments. The aim of the program is to "prevent waste, recycle, and buy and manufacture products made with recycled materials." Under the other program titled, Pay-As-You-Throw, the EPA provides educational material to communities to assist them in instituting a fee-based system for garbage. There are 5,000 communities with this program, and

waste reductions of between 14% and 27% are achieved on average ("Efforts"), with recycling rates of 32% to 59% (Change). Under previous traditional systems, people paid indirectly for waste services through taxation. As a result, people did not feel a connection between the amount of waste they produced and the cost of collection. Under the Pay-As-You-Throw system, people are typically motivated to recycle more and try to prevent waste in the first place. The EPA states that in 2002 these programs had the equivalent result of removing 28 million cars from the road ("Efforts"). These programs are a good start in increasing public awareness in relation to waste, but a lot more could be done.

In his book, *The Economics of Household Garbage and Recycling Behavior*, Don Fullerton comments that the Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 has had the most impact on how society deals with its waste. In this Act, states were assigned the responsibility of regulating household solid waste and recycling, resulting in many different policies throughout the country (Fullerton 17). Fullerton adds that the most common state-level initiative has been to develop a recycling goal as a percentage of solid waste. Each state has set its own goal, somewhere between 20% and 70%. However, there is no consequence if a state doesn't reach its goal. Many of the states simply move the deadline back instead of complying. Fullerton also states that these recycling goals have not had a significant impact on recycling (Fullerton 17). Table 1 sets out the various initiatives by the local states and the number of states

that have implemented them. As a result of the recycling goals not being enforced, the government needs to set mandates for recycling goals across the country, with enforcement consequences. There are seven states that have already started mandatory recycling programs (see Table 1). New Jersey passed its mandatory Recycling Act in 1987 following a voluntary recycling program. The goal set by the Act was to recycle at least 50% of its total solid waste stream ("Recycling"). The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection confirms that in 2003, they achieved 51.8%, the equivalent of 10.3 million tons ("Environmental"). The 1987 law required each county to submit a recycling plan that would achieve a 15% minimum goal in the first year. In the second year, the minimum goal was increased to 25%. The law also specified that at least three materials had to be recycled in addition to leaves. Funding the recycling program was achieved through a \$1.50/ton facilities surcharge, which generated annual revenue of \$12 million. Another important aspect of the law was to help stimulate markets for recyclables. Hamburg, New York also has a mandatory recycling program. They reported that 49% of their solid waste was diverted to recycling. They also reported that they had a 98% citizen participation ("Recycling").

With mandatory programs already emerging amongst the various states, now is the time for the U.S. government to encourage further mandatory programs. They could start by passing legislation requiring a minimum percentage

Table 1
U.S. state policies designed to increase recycling

Policy	Number of states implemented
Pass a recycling goal	45
Require all municipalities to implement curbside recycling programs and pass local ordinances making household and commercial recycling mandatory	7
Require all municipalities to implement curbside or drop-off recycling programs but not a mandatory ordinance	7
Require all municipalities and counties to satisfy a minimum recycling quota without designating the method to achieve it	8
Provide grants to municipalities to help finance recycling programs	34
Ban yard waste from being disposed of in landfills	23
Implement a deposit/refund system for beverage containers	9
Provide tax credits for new recycling facilities	29
Provide low-interest loans for new recycling facilities	15
Require all state government offices to purchase recycled materials	29

Source: Don Fullerton and Thomas C. Kinnaman. *The Economics of Household Garbage and Recycling Behavior*. Massachusetts: Edward Elgar, 2002: 17

recycling goal state-wide. How the states achieved the goal would be left to them. The required rate would be increased periodically once the states have had sufficient time to set-up their recycling programs. To achieve maximum recycling, curbside recycling should be encouraged. Recycling has to be convenient to the consumer for an effective recycling program to work.

In conjunction with the minimum percentage recycling goal, the government would need to pass legislation that encouraged the use of recycled products. This goal can be a major challenge to individual states.

Once the states achieve their recycling goals, markets for the recyclables can sometimes be hard to find (Fullerton 16). Some states have already addressed this issue by passing legislation requiring government offices and private firms to purchase a certain minimum of their inputs from recyclables. States are also providing tax credits and low-interest loans to encourage the production of new recycling plants (Fullerton 18).

The environmental effects of a mandatory recycling program can be enormous. New Jersey has reported that in 2003, because of its recycling

efforts, almost 10 million trees were saved. Also, three million tons of iron ore, coal, and limestone were saved by recycling scrap metal. They also saved over 86 trillion BTUs of energy, the equivalent of supplying power to over 842,000 homes, for one year, in New Jersey. Greenhouse gases were also reduced in 2003 by 2.4 million metric tons. The EPA calculated that approximately 1.67 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents are avoided for every ton of municipal solid waste recycled ("Environmental").

There are also huge economic benefits of the recycling industry. Total employment in that industry grew 8.3% annually from 1967 to 2000, compared to a 2.1% annual increase for total United States employment. The number of recycling industries has increased from 8,000 in 1967 to 56,000 in 2000. The industries employ 1.1 million people across the country. In New Jersey alone, 27,000 people work in the recycling industry, and receipts from that industry exceed \$5.9 billion annually ("Economic").

The United States generates enough municipal trash, in one year, to fill 10-ton trash trucks that, when lined up, could circle the equator eight times. The amount of trash is expected to increase by 16% by the year 2010 ("Recycling"). It is essential that the government take further action, in the form of legislation, to reduce this waste and the resulting greenhouse gases. If a mandatory recycling goal was introduced by the government, we would see mandatory recycling enforced at a state-wide and county

level. By introducing this goal, the government would be viewed as having an environmental conscience. By necessity, residents would have to adopt this environmental conscience. Residents would become better educated concerning the economic and environmental impacts of recycling, leading to an overall awareness of energy consumption in other areas of their life and the awareness that one person can make a difference.

The commitment to recycle cannot be left up to the few states that have already introduced mandatory recycling. All states need to be unified in a country-wide recycling goal that will eliminate the inconsistency that exists today.



Jennifer Lee sums up the current discrepancies on greenhouse gas regulations in her article for *The New York Times*, quoting Sandy Bourne, a researcher for global warming for the American Legislative Exchange Council: "members of industry and environment groups will go to the federal government to say, 'There is a patchwork quilt of greenhouse-gas regulations across the country. We cannot deal with the 50 monkeys. We must have one 800-pound gorilla. Please give us a federal mandate'" (Lee 148).

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Humbug to Hot Damn!

by Carrie Sullivan

From Janet Jackson's "wardrobe malfunction" to what can be said and depicted on television and radio, there is debate about what is or should be considered profane. There are certain groups who fight to censor and regulate what they consider to be profane, such as the Parent's Music Resource Center, founded by Tipper Gore, wife of ex-Vice President Al Gore. Even before the 1978 U.S. Supreme Court Ruling that it is unlawful to broadcast profanity, much of the country seemed to think that "bad words" could only cause harm to American culture. Although many Americans think that profanity impacts their culture in a negative way, the use of profanity often enkindles awareness and debate, and sometimes even entertainment.

Profanity, especially when publicized in the media, can raise debate and awareness of the First Amendment, which is commonly known as the freedom of speech, press, and petition. Americans have the privilege of being able to discuss and take part in changes made to national law, a privilege that many countries do not share. For example, if Cubans show dissent towards their government, they could be legally slaughtered. Because Americans are able to take part in their government, awareness and debate of any topic is important. People should explore all ideas and schools of thought on a particular subject before laws that may govern an entire country are passed. Sometimes, such debate can lead to better understanding of

American law and what is or is not considered a First Amendment issue.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that obscenity is not protected under the First Amendment, America's awareness of free speech issues has been heightened. A wealth of web-sites and publications have been dedicated to this important, though sometimes touchy, subject. The Federal Communications Commission, on its website, states, "Obscene material is not protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution and cannot be broadcast at any time." However, that which Americans consider to be "obscene" changes rapidly. In 1989, the hip-hop music group 2 Live Crew released the album *As Nasty as They Want to Be*. In 1990, the group was taken to court, where Judge Jose Gonzales ruled that the album was obscene and illegal to sell. Thus began a press frenzy, with the group interviewing with many outlets and fighting the ruling that their album was obscene. In 1992, a court of appeals overturned the ruling from Jose Gonzales, and then the U.S. Supreme Court upheld this decision. The album sold more than any of their future albums, and the law, at least in this small case, was changed.

Another potentially positive aspect of profanity in the media is that the regular use of bad language could possibly strip power from certain words, making them commonplace rather than offensive. Vulgar language, including racial slurs, is being used more and more in everyday life. Comedy acts such as

Chappelle's Show, *Mind of Mencia*, and *Blue Collar Comedy* regularly explore the "bad words" in American culture in an amusing, yet informative way. In such shows, certain racial slurs are shown as being nothing more than words, rather than a vehicle to insult or hurt others. For example, Carlos Mencia often opens his show *Mind of Mencia* with monologues that contain racial slurs for many groups of people. These monologues are greeted with laughter, rather than outcry. Mencia often uses racial slurs to describe himself, showing there is no offense to be taken from a simple word. Hearing profane language on a regular basis could lead something considered "profane" to become a part of everyday language, rather than be considered offensive. Words such as "humbug," meaning nonsense, rubbish, pretense or deception, were once considered profane, yet when spoken today, they cause no offense. People jokingly and freely say "humbug" now around the December Holiday season.

Matters of legality aside, using profanity is a natural way to communicate with others, as it is a part of American language and culture. Profanity can express emotion in a vociferous manner that almost everyone can understand, unlike vocabulary that could leave some searching for a dictionary. A 'four letter word' will express emotion quickly and more clearly than, for example, "Thou mewling, idle-headed lewdster," a Shakespearean insult that while not considered profane, would leave

many, if not all, people thinking, "Huh?"

Finally, the use of profanity in music might bring awareness of certain issues to audiences who might not otherwise take notice. For example, during the U.S. presidential campaigns and election of 2004, Eminem, a rap artist popular among many young people, wrote "Mosh," a song about voting and how it can change the country. The song contained language that is offensive to many groups of people, including the current President of the United States. However, some young people were excited by it and began to educate themselves about the way the American government works and the ways voting can empower everyone.

Many people believe that profanity can only have a negative impact on American culture. Perhaps people can be too free with words meant to express rare emotion or are just too lazy to learn to "properly" or "accurately" express themselves. Conversely, some people think that if censoring words became less of a priority for the United States Government, more time would possibly be spent on something from which the entire country could benefit. Whatever the view, Americans cannot ignore the fact that profanity does widely exist in today's culture. We would be foolish to ignore the positive aspects of profanity. As such a large part of American culture, it can help us evolve as a people or simply communicate in a familiar manner.

Standing Up To My Boss:

How I Used Confidence to Express Myself

by Cindel Eavenson

As a child I was rather plump, and I wore a thick pair of glasses. When I started elementary school, many of my peers began to make fun of my looks. I was afraid of what people thought about me; therefore, I was extremely shy and afraid to be myself. As time went by, my lack of confidence grew worse. I felt as if I were the only one in school who was afraid to express my true opinion on certain topics, and I did not believe in myself. I started my first job at CVS Pharmacy as soon as I turned sixteen, and I was a very timid, easily influenced, and self-conscious individual. If my co-workers were given an inch, they would take the entire mile. I was very unhappy, and I wanted so badly to overcome this tremendous fear of being talked about and put down. Many instances came up at work when I simply took the easiest way out in order to avoid trouble. I never knew that one day, when I least expected my life to change, a register dispute at CVS Pharmacy would solve all of my problems. The pressure of my co-workers influenced me to stand up to my boss, and my confidence and strength began to increase when my boss stood up for me. The register dispute at CVS Pharmacy gave me the confidence to stand up for my beliefs in all areas of my life.

When I was a child I was very shy and had little confidence in myself. I grew up in the small town of Carnesville, Georgia. My family and close friends loved me deeply, but I was still afraid to be myself.

Many of my peers thought that I looked funny, and they laughed and teased me constantly. My peers called me names such as "four eyes," "goggle girl," "fatso," and "chubby cheeks." My feelings were deeply hurt, and I began to feel belittled and scared much of the time. Many of my friends cared about me, but I felt as if they were betraying me when they laughed at some of the jokes others made about me. My peers laughed at many of the things that I mentioned in class. I was terribly afraid of being made fun of, and I wanted the joking to stop. I made the decision to keep myself quiet, and I hid my opinions from the world. When middle school started, I switched to contact lenses in hopes that the teasing would end; nevertheless, my peers still mocked me. Life was very hard on me, and I wanted to set myself aside from everything. My life was devastated when my closest friend passed away in a car accident. I cried for her all of the time, and I was very depressed. The one person I could always count on was gone forever, and I felt that I did not deserve to live a happy life without her. My parents were my main source of strength through my trying time. So I felt as if my whole life had been torn apart when my parents decided to get a divorce. My childhood home was left behind, and we moved to a new house thirty minutes away from Carnesville. My mother allowed me to attend the same school, but I was sad and lonely

without both of my parents. I went a long while without talking to anyone at school. I had lost most of my "baby fat," and I became a fairly pretty young lady, but I was intimidated by those girls I thought were prettier than me. My inner self began to slowly disappear. Eventually, the divorce left my mind, but other things still upset me. I went to school, spent time with my friends and boyfriend, and had fun going places and trying new things. However, I was very careful with whom I talked and with what I said. Being confident and opinionated would cause people to think that I was cocky and conceited, and I did not want anyone to assume that I was "full of myself" or that I was the kind of person who made fun of other people. I wanted to be loved for who I was, but I was too afraid to be myself. I dug myself a deep hole that I could not get out of. If my true feelings were locked away, nobody could possibly hurt or embarrass me. I was a young adult who lived in self-doubt, and I began to realize that my life was being greatly affected.

I started my first job at CVS Pharmacy as a shy, unconfident, and easily persuaded girl. My manager was a very open lady, and she had a strong and dominating personality. She intimidated me. I did not want to give my manager a reason to argue and fuss with me. I had a huge fear of being wrong; therefore, I did not want to be pushy with my opinions. There were times when I was wrong about refunds, policies, and photo lab procedures. The bad things that happened to me were stuck in my mind. Nobody at work was perfect, but my goal was to be perfect and

constant in everything that I did. I can recall standing at work and wishing that I could be happy and confident like the people in the photos. My manager, supervisors, and co-workers influenced my decision making and personal opinions. My manager called me into work many times, and she made me feel forced to go. I would put off everything important in my personal life just to please everyone at CVS. My manager wanted me to work five days a week, and I agreed to do so even though my homework time would decrease. I became constantly sleepy and stressed out in school. My co-workers intimidated me to do things such as purchase items from fund raisers, lie to customers about situations, work on store decorations off the clock, and to agree to things that I personally thought were wrong. Each time I decided to make up my own mind about something, someone would persuade me to think that my thoughts were wrong and to change my decision. My manager would always find out something that I did wrong to warn me about. One day I was talking to a co-worker about how my supervisors curse too much and are always in an awful mood. My statement somehow made its way back to my manager, and she confronted me. She asked me if I truly believed that there was too much foul language and forcefulness going on. I was afraid that she would think badly of me, and I told her that I was just kidding around. I was scared to share my opinions, even though I knew that my ideas could benefit CVS in many ways. My personal life with my friends, family, and boyfriend became unimportant to me. My job

became my number one priority. Many of my friends were mad at me because I spent a copious amount of my time at work, and there was no time for them. Everyone around me noticed the negative influence that work had on me. I basically allowed my "CVS family" to control my life, and I wanted to overcome my biggest fear: being made fun of!

An important argument at CVS Pharmacy gave me strength to face my fear. I left work one day, and I went to my house to work on some homework (which I rarely had time to complete). I received a phone call from one of my co-workers. He told me that there was a problem with the cash register. The register money had ended up being eighty-eight dollars short. I was extremely shocked, and I was concerned about why he was calling me about the situation. He explained that the real problem was that five cashiers rang up on the register, and the register was not counted in between shifts. He told me that all five of us were going to be held accountable for the money unless we decided to pay it back. I was absolutely furious! The supervisors are required to count the registers down each time a new cashier gets ready to ring up. The supervisor who was on duty that night had failed to complete her job, and I was not going to be blamed or punished for her mistake. I knew that this incident was the last straw for me. I told the boy that I was not going to pay CVS my hard-earned money for something that wasn't my fault. I did not take the money, and I was very careful (as always) when I rang up on that register. He explained to me that I would only have to pay twenty dollars and that

paying would keep all of us out of deep trouble. He said that we would all be written up if we did not find a way to produce the missing money. I knew at that very moment that I had to stand up for myself and quit giving in to everyone. I told him no for the second time, and I decided that I was not going to allow anyone to change my mind. The next day at work, I was informed that the four other workers had paid their part of the money and that I was the only person who had not paid. Everybody told me that I was going to be in huge trouble when my manager arrived. I simply decided to ignore their comments, and I knew that I was going to become a stronger individual for sticking to my decision. When my manager arrived at CVS, she called me into her office for a private conversation. I faced my deepest fear and I told her exactly what I thought about the register situation. I explained that the supervisor's job was to count down the register and that it was not my responsibility to make sure that she did her job. I stood up for my beliefs for the first time in years by telling her that I was not paying the money no matter what everyone else decided to do, and I waited to hear the worst from her. To my complete surprise, she was not mad. She said, "I am very proud of you for staying true to yourself. You did the correct thing by not being afraid and not allowing people to influence you. You are absolutely right, Cindel! The register shortage was not your fault. The supervisor will be blamed for not being consistent in her job!" At that very moment, I knew that I had become a new person. My transformation into a strong,

confident, and opinionated individual had begun. My manager did not write me up, and she began to respect my opinions; therefore, we became close friends. My manager even named me employee of the month! The other cashiers realized that they paid the money for no reason, and they now knew not to try to influence me anymore. The register dispute was the key to a new life for me, and I knew that I had finally changed and grown into a well-rounded individual.

I am now a strong person, and I am not afraid to be myself. Other people do not put me down or take advantage of me anymore. My friends, co-workers, and family love and respect me for who I am. I truly believe in myself, and everyone claims to see a huge difference in me. My fear of making mistakes has completely disappeared, and my thoughts and feelings are no longer hidden. I previously thought that I would be trapped in my unconfident ways forever. I proved myself wrong, and I now have faith in myself. I know that I can overcome any obstacles I encounter throughout my life. I still hold the same job as a Photo Lab Technician at CVS Pharmacy. I have been working at CVS for two years now. My manager and co-workers spend a lot of time with me outside of work, and I feel that I can honestly trust everyone close to me. My school work is wonderful now, and I find plenty of time to study and finish homework. I set aside personal time with all of my friends and my

boyfriend each week. I have changed so much, and am very thankful that I took the plunge that led to the new me. Many more tough times have struck me since the register dispute, but I know that everything will turn out just fine if I stay true to my beliefs. I have used my new knowledge to help me with recent problems. A counterfeit ten was found in my register not too long ago. My supervisor told me that I could either pay the money back or be in trouble. I remembered that when I first started working at CVS, my manager told me to only check money larger than twenty dollars. I stayed strong and did not worry about what my co-workers thought. I told my manager that I was not to blame for the fake money. She agreed to everything I said, and she told me to always talk to her about any questions or concerns that I have. I truly believe that I have been shaped into a new individual. I am sure that my confidence will be present for the rest of my life. If someone teases me about something, I just turn away and laugh it off. I still make mistakes in life, but I do not "sweat the small stuff." My future will be different due to my new lifestyle. What is the most effective way to overcome a tremendous fear? Face the fear! I am living life to the fullest, and I am excited about completing my life as the new me. I know from now on that when life throws me a lemon, I will simply smile and say, "Oh yeah! I love lemons! What else do you have?"

by Tiffany Drinkard

School systems often use labels to address problems facing students today. Our educational system teaches the masses and sometimes fails to connect with the individual. Schools are focused on enhancing students' self-esteem rather than compelling them to learn. If a student fails, the education system takes the blame rather than placing it on the student's lack of effort. Educators are so worried a failing student will reflect badly on the system that they come up with special needs programs to push them through. When students fail to understand the material presented to them, school advisers label them with a learning disability. This label allows the school system to treat these students differently and to provide additional attention. While on the surface this approach may seem appropriate, it can have a detrimental effect because the student puts forth less effort. Once labeled with a learning disability, faculty members focus on helping the student pass the course rather than learn the material. During elementary and middle school, advisers labeled me with a learning disability. That label had unfortunate consequences later in my school career.

My learning disability label had a negative effect on my social interaction with friends. Admitting that I was in the program was very difficult for me. Teachers pulled students with learning disabilities from the classroom to read tests to them. On test days, I would skip the

beginning of class so I could avoid this embarrassment. I did not want to be ostracized by fellow classmates because I received this special treatment. It made me feel as if I had done something wrong. When friends asked about why I was not in class, I would change the subject. Friends who knew I was in the program assumed I was not very smart. This meant I was never asked to participate in study sessions and no one asked me for help. I shielded myself with humor and often berated school as being a foolish endeavor. Soon I began to believe this myself, and I sank deeper into a delusion of what school was really all about.

The time I spent in my special classes distorted my perception of school. As I found ways to manipulate the system, school became almost a joke. Under the guise of not understanding the material, I discovered I could do less and less homework. I took few class notes, because teachers would photocopy other student's notes for me. I learned to read the teacher's facial expressions as she emphasized the correct answer while reading the test to me. I placed more emphasis on manipulating the learning disability system than learning the material.

I developed poor study habits while in the special needs program. Since I would be given my notes from other students, I would not pay attention during class. Doing homework was not required of me because I could simply say, "I do not

understand." Many times, I would find myself in a panic before a test, and I scrambled to read the notes given to me. Because the notes were not my own, I had difficulty understanding what the student had written. But I quickly learned that my comprehension of the notes did not matter; while the teacher was reading the test, she unintentionally put specific emphasis on the correct answer. If I did not understand a question, she would pause and begin to discuss the answers with me. As I fell deeper into this vicious cycle, I soon refrained from asking questions during class.

After I left the special needs program, class work became staggeringly difficult. I moved to a new school in the ninth grade and opted out of the special needs program. I took this chance to start fresh. Other students had no idea I came from a special needs program, and I wanted to keep it that way. I was now thrown into regular classrooms and expected to do my own work. Since I had always had notes taken for me, taking my own notes while listening to the teacher was difficult. I tried to write down everything the teacher said rather than focus on key ideas. While other kids were focusing on content, I was teaching myself how to take notes. Because I feared others would

learn about my past, I was reluctant to ask questions when I failed to understand the material. I also had trouble reading and understanding the questions on the tests. Since I no longer had a teacher reading and emphasizing the meaning of the questions, I found myself struggling to understand what the question was asking. Because I misunderstood the context of the question, I made many mistakes. I was reluctant to ask the teacher for clarification on questions during the test because I did not know the limits of what I could or could not ask. I also did not want fellow classmates to know I was having trouble understanding the questions. I had finally shunned the special needs label and was determined to make it on my own.

Being labeled with a learning disability, rather than being pushed to try harder, had a detrimental effect on my education. I spent too many years playing the system rather than learning how to learn. I believe that if I had been compelled to study harder, I would have been better prepared for high school. Since high school, I have discovered I am actually quite capable of keeping pace with other students. Much of this success came from convincing myself I was not learning disabled. I just needed to study like everybody else.

Defeating Worry

by Dawn Compton

Most of my life I have been an individual plagued by anxiety. Although I can remember when I started worrying, I cannot really remember what my life was like without having something to be concerned about. Basically, around the same time I had my children, I began a downward spiral toward a life filled with worry. This scared me, so I sought the help of a physician. He believed that what I was experiencing was caused by a chemical imbalance, maybe sparked by hormone changes during my pregnancy. Friends and family members believed it was my state of mind and that I chose to worry. Either way, worry was a controlling factor in my life until I participated in Beth Moore's Bible study, *Believing God*, which released me from the negative emotions drawn from my anxiety.

Worry consumed every facet of my being for many years. I was emotionally unstable because fear invaded my every thought and kept me from being able to relax. Trying to read or watch television was a joke, since I could not concentrate, much less read or watch anything with any violence or sad story lines. I remember trying to watch the movie, *Monster's Ball*, but instead I got sick to my stomach because the main character's son is struck and killed by a car. I worried about my children constantly and would not let them go anywhere or do anything because I was afraid for their safety. If my kids wanted to have a sleepover, they had to have it at our

house so I could check on them during the night. Often, I cried when thinking of all the bad things that could happen to them. I lost sleep at night worrying that the house would catch fire or that a burglar would break in. My daughter still has trouble sleeping in her own bed because I made her sleep in my room until she was eight. I was too terrified that something would happen to her if I wasn't right beside her. This also put a strain on my marriage. I couldn't sit on my back porch or sit down to a quiet dinner because that allowed my mind time to roam. My thoughts were always negative and depressing. All these things made me a miserable person. Instead of having a lot of friends and being fun to be around, I was always gloomy and I discouraged people; as a result, they wanted to get away from me. I realized just how bad I had become when I started to see my bad habits passed on to my children. The last thing I wanted was for them to live their lives the way I had been living mine. If there was one logical thought in my head, it was that I loved my family and wanted them to be happy, regardless of whether I was. Emotionally, my life was a wreck.

Looking for a way to break free from my worry became a constant task in my life. I tried to just stop worrying on my own, but that definitely did not work. I knew worrying was not something I needed to do, but I simply could not stop. Finally, I found the answer I

was looking for. *Believing God*, a Bible study at my church, taught the principles I needed in order to trust God to be in control and to understand that worrying is fruitless. Through it I found something that showed me how to quit worrying. The first principle I learned was that worrying does not change a situation; it just traps me into not being able to let go of it. Next, I was brought to the realization that God controls what happens and that He has my best interest at heart. Finally, during the study, the leader, Beth Moore, pointed out that even when bad things happen, there is a purpose for those events. I learned to pray through my worry and to leave my concerns at the feet of God. When I applied these principles to my life, they changed my way of thinking.

With a new thought process in place, things in my life started to change. I traded my worries for a life filled with happiness and contentment. I realized that I could actually enjoy life and not just suffer through it. Relaxing with a good book, watching television and movies, sitting on my screened-in porch, or just eating a meal in peace became achievable for me. This all happened because dreadful thinking and constant fear disappeared and were replaced with pleasant thoughts and a trust in God. Instead of continually protecting my children

from all the harm in the world, now I allow them to have fun, and I even join in on the fun with them. Sleep that once evaded me now refreshes my body each night. My marriage is stronger because my husband and I have alone time at night instead of a nine-year-old in the middle. In turn, these things make me a happier person. Now that I am happier, I have met many new friends, and I am finding that I even like myself again. This all is evidence of the fact my life has definitely undergone a dramatic change.

Sometimes change is bad; other times it is not. In my case, seeing the changes that have occurred in my life proves that change can be good. Once, my life was emotionally unstable, but now I am able to enjoy the pleasures of life and the treasures in my life, including my family. Joining in on the study has not only worked to my advantage but also benefited *them*. Life at the Compton house has forever been changed since I completed the study, *Believing God*. When my family looks in my direction, they now see Dawn Compton, the real me, and I am now free to love them completely. That is the most important change I could have made. I still have brief moments in which my mind drifts toward worry. However, worry is not in control of my emotions anymore! With God's help, I am finally free to enjoy life.

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